

**Children's
Health
Matters™**



May 24, 2004

An outreach and advocacy program to facilitate enrollment in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program and to ensure access to quality health care

The Honorable John D. Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
2383 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Sponsors

Ascension Health
St. Louis, MO

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Dear Representative Dingell:

As strong supporters of Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the members of *Children's Health Matters* would like to express our strong support for the FamilyCare Act of 2004. We thank you for sponsoring this vital piece of legislation that we believe represents a critical step towards providing coverage to uninsured children and their families.

Through expansions of Medicaid and SCHIP, the FamilyCare Act directly addresses the problem of health care access that so many Americans face. Even with the existence of these important safety net programs, there are 44 million Americans without health insurance. We are especially pleased that this bill would provide new state options to cover children through age twenty and parents in Medicaid and SCHIP.

The FamilyCare Act of 2004 also demonstrates a significant commitment to underserved populations by extending the Medicaid and SCHIP programs to legal immigrant children, parents and pregnant women. Allowing states the option of providing Medicaid and SCHIP coverage to otherwise eligible legal immigrant children would ensure their access to primary and preventive health care, enabling them to grow up healthy and participate in their communities. We also applaud that the FamilyCare Act would provide new options for outreach, presumptive eligibility and streamlined enrollment that will allow families to gain quicker access to the health care they need.

Children's Health Matters, a collaborative effort among Catholic health facilities and Catholic social service agencies, works nationally and at the state level to ensure as many eligible children as possible are enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP. In 2003, Children's Health Matters' members across the country assisted more than 155,000 families in completing applications for Medicaid and SCHIP. We believe that it is critically important to ensure that poor and low-income children and families have access to the health care they so vitally need.

We thank you for introducing this legislation as we believe it represents an important step towards reducing the number of uninsured in our country and reducing the barriers to health care that many families face. Please let us know if we can be of assistance. For more information, please contact Lisa Smith, Director of Children's Health Matters, at (703) 549-1390, ext. 160.

Sincerely,

Ascension Health
Bon Secours Health System, Inc.
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Health Association
Catholic Health Initiatives
Catholic Healthcare Partners

